



## ITALY

### The Role of the Italian Government for the Promotion of Italian Language

The teaching of Italian language in the local school system has proved to be a successful experience. Teachers, parents, students realize the potential of a language of culture that is also a resource in trade, business and other areas. In order to meet these expectations the Italian Government provides funds each year for activities dealing with the teaching of Italian language, in school as well as in extra school programs. The funds are disbursed through local nonprofit organizations whose mission is to promote Italian language in their region. In 2001 these contributions amounted to 30 million Euro (approximately 30 million US dollars) worldwide, primarily targeted to Europe, North and South America (2 million dollars for the United States).

Six School Offices are currently attached to the Embassy of Italy in Washington DC and to the Consulates in New York City, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami respectively. The mandate of the School Supervisors, Italian professionals from the Italian Ministry of Education, is very broad. The financial contributions of the Italian Government are channeled through nonprofit organizations dedicated to the promotion of the Italian language and culture in the United States. In most cases these organizations were established through the efforts of Italian citizens resident in the US, and/or of Americans of Italian descent. In order to receive grants from the Italian Government to support their language courses these organizations must meet a number of requirements and are subject to the direction and close monitoring of the Educational Directors attached to the Italian Embassy in Washington and five Italian Consulates throughout the United States.

The "Enti Gestori", under the supervision of the Italian School Offices, enter into agreements with single schools and clusters to establish courses of Italian. To this end they undertake to provide teachers, and pay a portion of their salaries, for an initial period. Multimedia and other teaching materials are also provided. "Enti gestori" also financially support teachers' training activities in cooperation with well-known Italian Universities: Università per Stranieri di Perugia – Università per Stranieri di Siena – Cà Foscari di Venezia.

### Memoranda of Understanding and Plans of Cooperation

In the same vein, new prospects have been opened through conventions and agreements reached by the Italian Government and some States and Counties in the US. At present an agreement is in place with the State of Connecticut (and with the Central Connecticut State University) and another one is under negotiation with the State of New Jersey. Other Conventions of this sort are being finalized with Miami Dade County (Florida).

The Agreements define mutual commitments of the involved parties, provide a widespread information on the support available from the Italian authorities for the establishment of courses of Italian through the whole school system of the State or County concerned and set up resource centers for training of teachers of Italian (see in particular the case of Connecticut).

The Italian Authorities are committed to working towards the goal of entering into more agreements of this sort in the US with a view to consolidating the results achieved so far and to further promoting the teaching of Italian in the schools.

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